

Implementing Personal Hedonic Calculus

Post by "Kalosyni" of December 6, 2021 at 4:39 PM

Here are some excerpts of the main points from my latest blog post, which I hope upholds this forum's take on Epicureanism. Feel free to correct me if something isn't quite "kosher" in the Epicurean sense, or if there is anything that should be added.

Quote

The following blog post came to me after reading an email in which a friend wrote the phrase: "I guess I better....". It got me thinking, because I've also noticed that phrase in my self, in various situations. It is sometimes also phrased as "I guess I better stop...." The following is intended to be helpful for evaluating whether or not a given activity is "working" or bringing benefits or bringing pleasure for your unique situation.

"Activities Evaluation" (both long-term and short-term).

State the specific activity that you wish to evaluate:

Evaluate this activity by choosing the best guess for each point below:

1) How likely is this to result in the pleasure and enjoyment of increased future security?(Increased resources of monetary, material goods, or friendship/community).

---Gauranteed/Likely/Uncertain/Unlikely/Impossible---

2) How likely is this to result in the pleasure and enjoyment of increased status or good reputation? (Being evaluated by others as knowledgeable, wise, skilled, courageous, or compassionate AND which also leads to increased resources of friendship/community.

*Virtuous activities engaged in during isolation and/or exhibited only in the presence of strangers are less likely to increase "social security" and less likely to lead to long-term benefit).

---Gauranteed/Likely/Uncertain/Unlikely/Impossible

3) How likely is this to result in the pleasure and enjoyment of more stable existing relationships and/or new friendships/new community engagement?

---Guaranteed/Likely/Uncertain/Unlikely/Impossible---

4) How likely is this to result in pleasure and enjoyment from increased skill and artistic flow? (The joy of doing this, and the enjoyment of the focused discipline to do this).

---Gauranteed/Likely/Uncertain/Unlikely/Impossible---

5) How likely is this to result in immediate sensory pleasure and enjoyment?

---Gauranteed/Likely/Uncertain/Unlikely/Impossible---

6) How likely is this to result in a bad outcome? (Loss of property/wealth/reputation, loss of friendship/community, loss of good health, emotional/physical pain caused to self or to others, or a conflicting opportunity cost (time which could have gone to establishing future security -or- a more pleasure-worthy endeavor).

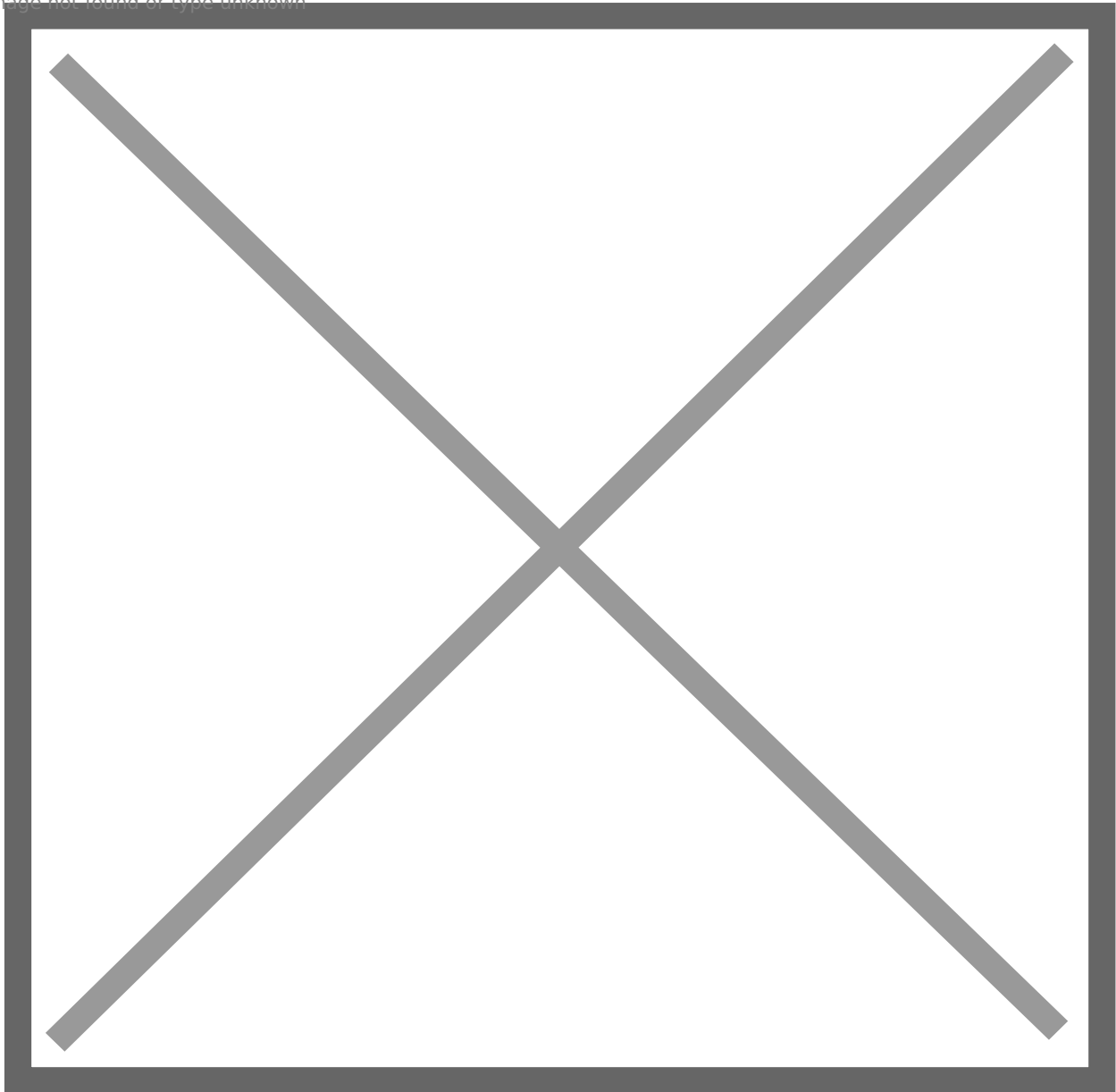
---Gauranteed/Likely/Uncertain/Unlikely/Impossible---

7) How likely is this to lead to an immediate sense of satiation or feeling of satisfaction?

---Gauranteed/Likely/Uncertain/Unlikely/Impossible---

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[Evaluation of Activities for Benefit and Pleasure](#)

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Post by "Don" of December 6, 2021 at 6:03 PM



I see your post as more Epicurean than Utilitarian. Your post is more concerned with its effect on the individual. My rudimentary understanding of Utilitarianism is that their hedonic calculus actually counts up numbers of dolors and hedons and worries a lot about the "needs of the many." That always seemed too abstract. Yours seems very grounded in the real world.

Plus those beers look intriguing. I'm not sure if that was your own photo, but now I want to hunt them down. 😊

Post by "Cassius" of December 6, 2021 at 6:16 PM

I agree with Don. The post is good. In contrast utilitarianism seems mostly designed to avoid using the word pleasure and to in fact obfuscate the whole issue of what their goal in life really is.

Post by "Godfrey" of December 6, 2021 at 8:11 PM

It does seem like a good checklist when faced with a difficult decision. I agree with Don and Cassius that it doesn't seem utilitarian, which of course around here is a very good thing!

In contrast to Don, I can't say that I would get much pleasure out of those beers!

Post by "Kalosyni" of December 7, 2021 at 1:06 PM

LOL...yes it's a picture of my holiday stash. I shop at Trader Joe's and they have lots of fun stuff. So far I tried the Pecan Pie Porter and liked it...haven't tried the others yet.

Thanks for all your helpful feedback. I see I better correct my post, and in the future be more careful in how I state things.

Post by "Cassius" of December 7, 2021 at 3:00 PM

What is pecan pie "porter"? I know what pecan pie is, but "porter?"

Post by “Don” of December 7, 2021 at 4:25 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

What is pecan pie "porter"? I know what pecan pie is, but "porter?"

Porter is a dark style of beer, similar to a stout.

Post by “Joshua” of December 8, 2021 at 1:41 PM

Quote

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South [...]

I'm a Keats-ian where beverages are concerned, whether its libations or poetry.

So wine for me, thank you very much!

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 8, 2021 at 10:28 PM

Yes wine has certain romantic and aesthetic aspect. I used to drink more wine back when I was married. We would have Cabernet wine with dinner. But 50 percent of the time it would give me

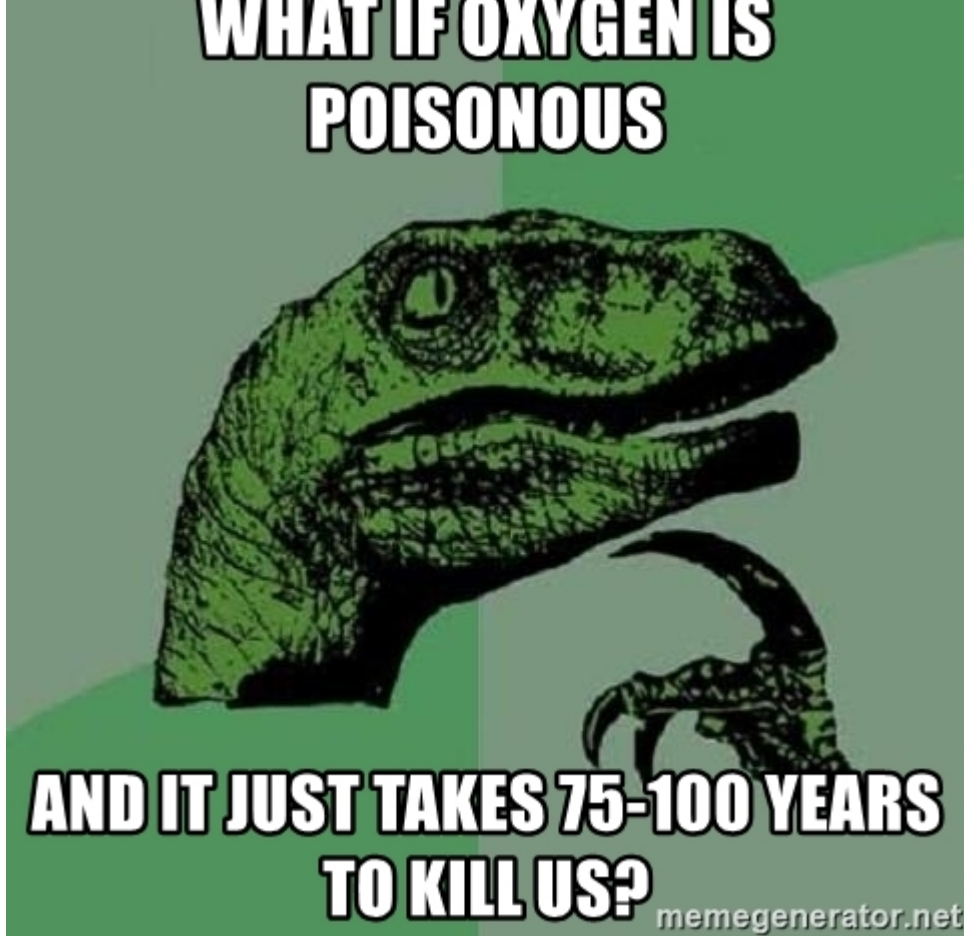
a headache. I cut back on portion size and sometimes had only 2 oz. and that worked better for me. Since living single and being such a lightweight, I cut way back on wine. Rarely bring any home. In summertime I've mixed a rose' with sparkling mineral water and add a touch of cherry or other fruit juice.

Beer has lower percentage of alcohol and rarely gives me a headache (I avoid IPA which causes headache). And lately beer just seems to taste better to me. There must be something genetic about my not metabolizing alcohol very well, and so I've learned to enjoy it by drinking smaller quantities. I've even tried adding sparkling mineral water to certain beers, but still experimenting with which kind and what else to add.

Post by “Marco” of December 9, 2021 at 2:03 AM

Studies find drinking any amount of alcohol, even wine, causes damage to the brain. Coffee (max 3 cups/day), proves to be good for the brain.

Post by “Don” of December 9, 2021 at 7:17 AM



Post by “Matt” of December 9, 2021 at 1:15 PM

I’ve been drinking brandy and cognac these last couple of months usually mixed with cider. In autumn and winter when the weather gets colder, I typically switch to hard cider and various Irish and Scotch whiskies. In the summer I typically drink sangria with vodka or tequila. I’ll drink beer, but it’s infrequent. Usually it needs to be a craft beer of sorts.

As far as wine goes I’ll do dry reds like Cabernet and Malbec. And of course if mead is available I’ll have a glass. ☐☐☐

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 9, 2021 at 10:43 PM

These Principle Doctrines should be helpful with regard to hedonic calculus:

25. If at all critical times you do not connect each of your actions to the natural goal of life, but instead turn too soon to some other kind of goal in thinking whether to avoid or pursue something, then your thoughts and your actions will not be in harmony.

εἰ μὴ παρὰ πάντα καιρὸν ἐπανοίσεις ἕκαστον τῶν πραττομένων ἐπὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς φύσεως, ἀλλὰ προκαταστρέψεις εἴτε φυγὴν εἴτε δίωξιν ποιούμενος εἰς ἄλλο τι, οὐκ ἔσσονται σοι τοῖς λόγοις αἱ πράξεις ἀκόλουθοι.

26. The desires that do not bring pain when they go unfulfilled are not necessary; indeed they are easy to reject if they are hard to achieve or if they seem to produce harm.

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 2, 2024 at 1:10 PM

In last night's Zoom I presented the following [Principal Doctrines](#) (Long and Sedley translation) because these deal with the "limits of pleasure and pain" and are very important for one's personal hedonic calculus. These provide guidance so as not to be overcome by excessive desires or unwanted pains.

I used the Long and Sedley translation of selected [Principal Doctrines](#) and placed them in the following order:

11. “Were we not upset by the worries that celestial phenomena and death might matter to us, and also by failure to **appreciate the limits of pains and desires**, we would have no need for natural philosophy.”

10. “If the causes of the pleasures of the dissipated released mental fears concerning celestial phenomena and death and distress, and in addition **taught the limit of desires**, we should never have any reason to reproach them [i.e. the dissipated], since they would be satisfying themselves with pleasures from all directions and would never have pain or distress, which constitutes the bad.”

(*dissipated - of a person or way of life overindulging in sensual pleasures)

3. “The removal of all pain is **the limit of the magnitude of pleasures**. Wherever pleasure is present, as long as it is there, pain or distress or their combination is absent.”

18. “The pleasure in the flesh does not increase when once the pain of need has been

removed, but it is only varied. A **the limit of pleasure in the mind** is produced by rationalizing those very things and their congeners which used to present the mind with its greatest fears."

(*congener - a thing or person of the same kind or category as another).

20. "The flesh places **the limits of pleasure** at infinity, and needs an infinite time to bring it about. But the intellect, by making a rational calculation **the end and the limit which govern the flesh**, and by dispelling the fears about eternity, brings about the complete life, so that we no longer need the infinite time. But neither does it shun pleasure, nor even when circumstances bring about our departure from life does it suppose, as it perishes, that it has in any way fallen short of the best life."

28. "Confidence that nothing terrible lasts for ever or even for a long time is produced by the same judgement that also achieves the insight that friendship's security within those very limitations is perfectly complete."

4. "Pain does not last continuously in the flesh: when acute it is there for a very short time, while the pain which just exceeds the pleasure in the flesh does not persist for many days; and chronic illnesses contain an excess of pleasure in the flesh over pain."

29. "Natural and necessary [desires], according to Epicurus, are ones which bring relief from pain, such as drinking when thirsty; natural but non-necessary are ones which merely vary pleasure but do not remove pain, such as expensive foods; neither natural nor necessary are ones for things like crowns and erection of statues."

(excessive quantities of foods would make more sense here compared to expensive (if you are really hungry then food is food whether or not it is cheap or expensive).

30. "Whenever intense passion is present in natural desires which do not lead to pain if they are unfulfilled, these have their origin in empty opinion; and the reason for their persistence is not their own nature but the empty opinion of the person."

21. "He who knows the limits of life knows how easy it is to obtain that which removes pain caused by want and that which makes the whole of life complete. He therefore has no need for competitive involvements."

25. "If you fail to refer each of your actions on every occasion to nature's end, and stop short at something else in choosing or avoiding, your actions will not be consequential upon your theories."